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MIGRANT WAR WORKERS IN NEWARK



A Report by

**The Housing Authority
of the City of Newark
New Jersey**

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1944

THIS REPORT is published by the Housing Authority of the City of Newark, established by the City of Newark in 1937 to clear slums and to build and manage low-rent housing. The Authority has built 2,435 homes for low-income families, of which 527 are temporarily occupied by war workers. These modern, attractive dwellings are grouped in six developments. In addition, the Authority operates one federally-owned project for 301 war workers and their families.

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF NEWARK

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57 Sussex Avenue
Newark 4, New Jersey
April 1944

**MIGRANT
WAR WORKERS
IN NEWARK**

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PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

To plan intelligently and economically for the housing needs of war workers who have migrated to Newark, a center of war production, it was essential to know how many workers have come into the city, how many have brought their families, and to what extent existing homes provide decent shelter. The Housing Authority of the City of Newark found that there was no reliable answer to any one of these basic questions. The Authority therefore decided to undertake a survey that would yield the desired data.

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The survey was conducted jointly by the Authority and the Department of Public Affairs of the City of Newark. It was concerned primarily with persons who moved into Newark from places outside the city between December 7, 1941, and October 1, 1943, a period of about 22 months. As shown on succeeding pages, the investigation revealed that 20,000 migrants have made their homes in Newark—a number greater than the population of such cities as Asbury Park and Long Branch, N. J. All of the facts about these migrants—where they came from, how they live, where they work—are set forth in the tables following. This information is of obvious value to the Housing Authority in fulfilling its responsibilities as the local housing agency, and it is of further value to all citizens interested in a better planned and better housed city.

Dr. Jay Rumney of the University of Newark and consultant

to the Housing Authority directed the survey and Miss Alice V. Halpin was supervisor in charge of field enumerators and office personnel. John A. Brady, director of the Department of Public Affairs of the City of Newark, arranged for personnel of the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Public Health to act as enumerators. Executive Secretary Julius J. Seaman of the New Jersey State Housing Authority and his staff cooperated by supplying office space, equipment, maps, records and stenographic assistance.

The Housing Authority wishes to thank many others for their advice or service. Among those who contributed most are Ralph A. Villani, director of the Department of Parks and Public Property; Owen A. Malady, director of the Department of Public Welfare; Dr. Charles V. Craster, city health officer; Joseph A. Nevin and Miss Phyllis Kenner of the Federal Public Housing Authority; Alexander L. Crosby of New York; the School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University; F. G. Deragon, regional research supervisor of the Bureau of the Census; and L. Durward Badgley and others of the National Housing Agency staff. Thanks to the valuable help given by local, state and federal agencies and by other interested residents, the enumerators were able to complete the field work between August 17 and October 31, 1943. The final report was completed in December.

FRANK B. WENRICH
Executive Director
Housing Authority of the City of Newark

THE METHOD

The survey was based on the 98 census tracts into which the city is divided. In each tract, one block was completely canvassed. The block selected was the one with the number of dwelling units nearest to the average number for all blocks in the tract. For example, census tract No. 1 consists of 27 blocks and 906 dwelling units, an average of 33 to a block. Closest to this average was block 10, which contained 34 dwelling units. The enumerators therefore interviewed all of the families in block 10, using lists of street names and numbers, types of structure, etc., copied from the records of the New Jersey State Housing Authority. Whenever a migrant was found, the enumerator filled in a questionnaire.

20,000 MIGRANTS

Enumerators visited 6,941 dwelling units, 6.2% of the 112,194 occupied dwelling units of Newark in 1940. There were 24,177 persons in the dwellings visited, or 5.6% of the city's 429,760 population in 1940. The actual number of migrants found was 1,045 (846 white, 199 Negro), or 4.6% of the total number of persons in the dwellings surveyed. Projecting this percentage on the total population of 429,760 would yield more than 19,000 migrants (19,760), of which about 3,000 would be Negroes. Another estimate, taking into account the rental range of the blocks where migrants were found, gives a total of 18,660 migrants,

including 3,550 Negroes. Still another estimate, considering the rental value and population in each tract, results in a higher figure. The most dependable conclusion is that the number of migrants is about 20,000, the lower limit being 18,500 and the higher, 22,500. Taking the round figure of 20,000 (16,000 white, 4,000 Negro) and calculating family sizes as found in the sample, we get 8,000 single person and 2,300 multi-person white families and 2,640 single and 504 multi-person Negro families. The upper limit of 22,500 migrants may be closer to the mark, since the survey covered few of the rooming houses and hotels in which preliminary studies showed a large percentage of migrants.

THE MIGRANT'S FAMILY

Among the 1,045 migrants there were 504 separate families, including 1-person families, and of these 377 were white and 127 Negro. The average size of the migrant's family was thus 2.1. If 1-person families are excluded, the average white migrant family becomes 3.5 and the average Negro family, 2.7. It seems that more white migrants brought in their dependents than did the Negroes. Enumerators also asked how many persons related to the migrant would like to come to Newark to live. The total was only 62 (39 white, 23 Negro), but the data on this question were incomplete since a number of migrants in rooming houses were not personally interviewed. Information about them was obtained from the proprietors.

FEMALES PREDOMINATE

More females than males were found among both the white and Negro migrants. The 67% of females among Negroes was well above the 56% for whites; the overall figure was 57%.

Analyzed by ages, the largest age group for both whites and Negroes was the 18-38 bracket, which was exactly 50% of the total. Next largest was that of children under 18. Comparatively small (19%) was the number of migrants over 38 years.

Of the 1,045 migrants, 280 or 27% were children under 16. Among whites the proportion was 30% (249 out of 846), almost double the 16% for Negroes (31 out of 199).

TABLE 1
AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION OF 1045 MIGRANTS

	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Under 18	319	30	281	33	38	20
18-38	522	51	396	47	126	63
39-48	107	10	87	10	20	10
49-65	97	9	82	10	15	7
Totals	1045	100	846	100	199	100
Male	439	42	374	44	65	33
Female	606	58	472	56	134	67
Totals	1045	100	846	100	199	100

MOST ARE MARRIED

Most migrants over 18 were married—65%, to be exact. In the Negro group, however, only 51% were married, as compared with 70% among the whites.

TABLE 2
MARITAL STATUS OF 726 MIGRANTS OVER 18

	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	249	34	170	30	79	49
Married (Including Widowed and Separated)	477	66	395	70	82	51
Totals	726	100	565	100	161	100

FEW LARGE FAMILIES

There is no parallel between the migrant workers of Newark and the truckfuls of Joads that moved westward in the dustbowl days. Small families predominate among the war migrants, only 17% of the 504 families numbering more than three persons. In the Negro group the percentage of 3-person or larger families was almost uniformly smaller than for the whites.

TABLE 3
504 MIGRANT FAMILIES ACCORDING TO SIZE OF FAMILY

No. in family	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	270	54	185	50	85	66
2	83	16	58	15	25	20
3	65	13	56	14	9	7
4	53	10	49	13	4	3
5	14	3	11	3	3	3
6 and over	19	4	18	5	1	1
Totals	504	100	377	100	127	100

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS BY FAMILY SIZE

No. in family	Total		White		Negro	
	Families	Wage earners	Families	Wage earners	Families	Wage earners
1	270	237	185	168	85	69
2	83	101	58	70	25	31
3	65	85	56	72	9	13
4	53	71	49	67	4	4
5	14	22	11	15	3	7
6 and over	19	32	18	30	1	2
Totals	504	548	377	422	127	126

FROM EAST AND SOUTH

The 1,045 migrants come from 29 states, the District of Columbia, and two European countries: France and Spain. The overwhelming majority of white migrants came from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York (771 out of 846), exemplifying the well-known "law of migration" that migrants travel short distances. Most of the Negroes come from the south, five states—Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Florida—contributing 113 out of 199, or 60%. Next largest groups originated in New Jersey, New York and West Virginia. The results of the inquiry into places of origin are similar, so far as white migrants are concerned, to the findings for Hackensack and Bloomfield by the Tolan Committee (see *Hearings before the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration*, Part 27, p. 10470 and p. 10513).

TABLE 5
ORIGIN OF MIGRANTS MOVING INTO NEWARK FROM
DECEMBER 7, 1941, TO SEPTEMBER 1943

	Total	White	Negro
Pennsylvania	392	389	3
New Jersey	213	198	15
New York	198	184	14
Georgia	38	6	32
North Carolina	26	4	22
Florida	22	5	17
Virginia	25	4	21
South Carolina	21	0	21
Massachusetts	17	14	3
Ohio	16	8	8
District of Columbia	13	2	11
West Virginia	7	0	7
Kentucky	6	5	1
Delaware	5	0	5
Maryland	8	3	5
Tennessee	5	1	4
Louisiana	1	0	1
Michigan	4	4	0
Oklahoma	4	4	0
Alabama	3	2	1
Connecticut	3	1	2
Kansas	3	0	3
California	2	2	0
Iowa	2	2	0
Rhode Island	2	2	0
South Dakota	2	2	0
Indiana	1	1	0
Mississippi	1	0	1
Missouri	1	0	1
Texas	1	0	1
France	2	2	0
Spain	1	1	0
Totals	1045	846	199

WHEN THEY CAME

Migration of war workers to Newark climbed steadily from the outbreak of war and reached its peak in December 1942. After a 3-month decline, particularly noticeable among the whites, the upward trend was resumed in March 1943 and continued through June. From that point total migration again shrank but the number of white migrants showed a slight increase.

TABLE 6
NUMBER OF MIGRANTS MOVING INTO NEWARK FROM
DECEMBER 7, 1941, TO SEPTEMBER 1943

	1942				1943			Total
	Dec. 7- March	April- June	July- Sept.	Oct.- Dec.	Jan.- March	April- June	July- Sept.	
White	96	138	152	164	82	106	108	846
Negro	11	15	24	55	22	47	25	199
Totals	107	153	176	219	104	153	133	1045

BAD HOUSING and GOOD HOUSING in Newark

The six illustrations following contrast the kind of homes inhabited by about 50% of Newark's migratory workers (and by a large proportion of the city's permanent population) with the modern homes built by the Housing Authority.

Newark's slums are not a new problem. They have existed for years, adding to the cost of municipal services, contributing little in taxes but injuring the value of adjacent property and, most serious of all, stunting the development of young citizens.

In the past seven years slums have been torn down and their occupants rehoused in modern low-rent homes for the first time in the city's history.



A combination playground, junk heap and front yard on Nassau Place.

This playground is typical of many built by the Housing Authority.

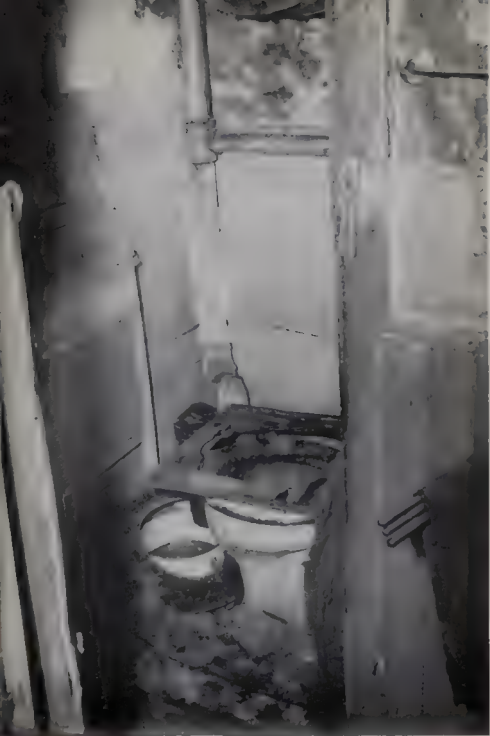




Kitchen plumbing like this is found in thousands of Newark homes.

There are 2,435 kitchens as clean as this one in Housing Authority homes.





The photograph of this toilet in a private home was not retouched.



A Housing Authority bathroom. Tubs are luxuries in slum dwellings.

SLUM CLEARANCE

The agency for this achievement has been the Housing Authority of the City of Newark, which has built six projects and is managing a seventh for the Federal government. Of the six projects built and owned by the Authority, four are occupied wholly by low income families. One is occupied by war workers and the other by low-income families and war workers. The latter two projects were not completed when war was declared, and the Authority offered them to the Federal government to aid in the war effort.

The Authority is the only public agency in the community concerned solely with housing and is now engaged in surveying housing conditions in the city of Newark and planning a post-war housing program.

The seven projects, and some facts about them, are listed below:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Dwelling Units</i>	<i>Total Development Cost</i>
Pennington Court	950	236	\$1,266,473
Seth Boyden Court	1895	530	2,716,749
Stephen Crane Village.....	1311	354	1,655,786
James Baxter Terrace	2344	613	3,752,370
*Felix Fuld Court.....	1198	300	1,846,688
*John Hyatt Court	1530	402	2,173,491
*Joseph Bradley Court.....	979	301	1,306,818

* Partially or fully occupied by war workers. Joseph Bradley Court is the project being managed for the Federal Government and is for war workers only.

OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS

Unskilled workers comprise 34% of the total number of migrants, numbering 363 out of the 1,045. The proportion of unskilled among whites was 30% ; for Negroes, 55% .

Next largest group in the working force was the skilled workers, who made up 16% of the migrants. Only 8% of the Negroes were in this class as against 18% of the whites. Not a single Negro professional migrant was found but even among the whites professional persons totaled only 13 or 1.5% .

When the percentages are figured in relation to the total number of wage earners rather than the total number of migrants, the unskilled whites account for 60% and the unskilled Negroes 87% of each group. Skilled whites were 37% of the white wage earners and skilled Negroes 13% of the total Negroes employed. Professional workers among the whites represented 3% .

TABLE 7
OCCUPATIONS OF MIGRANTS

Occupation	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	13	1.5	13	1.5		
Skilled	173	16.5	157	18	16	8
Unskilled	362	34.6	252	30	110	55
Minors, children at school and persons at home.....	461	44	412	49	49	25
Seeking work	18	1.7	9	1.5	9	5
Unemployable	18	1.7	3		15	7
Totals	1045	100	846	100	199	100

MOST ARE WAGE EARNERS

As shown in Table 4, wage earners totaled 548, or 52% of the total number of migrants. The proportion of wage earners among the Negroes was 63% compared with 51% for whites, this disparity reflecting the higher percentage of single Negroes and the smaller size of Negro migrant families.

Table 8 shows that 59% of the 548 wage earners were employed in Newark, mainly in plants engaged in war production. The largest single employer of Newark's migrants, however, was Federal Ship Building Corporation at Kearny, with 44 on its payroll. (Since the survey covered a sample of about 5%, it may be roughly estimated that about 800 migrants living in Newark found work at the Kearny plant.)

Other migrants were employed at distances ranging up to 20 miles from Newark, 12 workers commuting to New York and Long Island.

TABLE 8
WHERE MIGRANTS WORK

	Total	White	Negro
Newark	313	234	79
Office of Dependency Benefits.	42	9	33
Westinghouse	23	23	
Federal Tel. & Tel.	22	21	1
National Union Radio	12	11	1
Titeflex	9	9	

Public Service	4	4	
Breeze Corp.	4	4	
Foote-Pierson	4	2	2
American Transformer	3	2	1
Tiffany	3	3	
Scattered	187	146	41
Port Newark	15	9	6
Harrison	68	57	11
Otis Elevator	17	17	
Crucible Steel	16	13	3
RCA	15	14	1
Worthington Pump	7	6	1
Hyatt	5	5	
Scattered	8	2	6
Kearny	72	61	11
Federal Ship Building	44	40	4
Western Electric	20	16	4
Congoleum-Nairn	3		3
Scattered	5	5	
Bloomfield	13	12	1
Linden	7	6	1
Irvington	7	5	2
Arlington	6	2	4
Belleville	6	5	1
Hillside	4	2	2
East Orange	4	4	
West Orange	3	3	
Orange	3	2	1
Elizabeth	6	5	1
Hoboken	2		2
Caldwell	1	1	
Dover	1		1
Hackensack	1		1
Jersey City	1	1	
Rahway	1	1	
Summit	1		1
Teaneck	1	1	
New York City	10	9	1
Long Island, N. Y.	2	2	

Totals	548	422	126
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SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

Some bathrooms have chromium fixtures, and others have nickel plate with greenish brass showing through. But almost 10% of the migrant families surveyed had no bath facilities whatever. Another 40% shared a bathroom, and 50% had a tub or shower they could call their own.

More surprising than the lack of bathrooms was the fact that 13 families, 2.6% of the total, had no toilet facilities. Another 15 families lived in dwellings without heat. If the survey sample was representative, and it is believed to be, we may estimate that out of the 13,500 migrant families in Newark there were 1,300 without bathrooms, about 325 families without toilets, and 375 families without heating facilities.

The worst dwellings were also the most overcrowded. For example, 40 places had no ventilation and of the 40, 31 were occupied by one or more persons per room. Again: 31 dwellings were rated by the enumerators as "unfit for use." Of these, 22 had one or more persons per room, and 9 averaged less than one person per room.

The proportion of Negroes found in substandard homes was much greater than that of whites. Thus 25% of the Negro families had no bathing facilities as compared with 3% among the whites.

TABLE 9
STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING
OCCUPIED BY 238 FAMILIES OUT OF 504
MIGRANT FAMILIES

	Index 1 or more persons per room				Index less than 1 person per room			
	Total No.	%	White No.	Negro No.	Total No.	%	White No.	Negro No.
Need major repairs	36	20	14	22	17	27	7	10
Unfit for use.....	22	12	3	19	9	14.5	2	7
No ventilation	31	18	6	25	9	14.5	1	8
No toilet	7	4	1	6	6	10	0	6
No bath	33	19	13	20	13	21	1	12
No cooking	35	20	31	4	5	8	5	0
No heat	12	7	6	6	3	5	3	0
Totals	176	100	74	102	62	100	19	43

TABLE 10
HOUSING CONDITIONS OF 504 MIGRANT FAMILIES

	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TOILET FACILITIES						
Private	273	54	239	63	34	27
Shared	218	43	137	37	81	63
None	13	3	1	0	12	10
Totals	504	100	377	100	127	100

COOKING FACILITIES

Private	326	65	277	73	49	38
Shared	138	27	64	17	74	58
None	40	8	36	10	4	4
Totals	504	100	377	100	127	100

BATH FACILITIES

Private	243	48	222	60	21	16
Shared	215	43	141	37	74	59
None	46	9	14	3	32	25
Totals	504	100	377	100	127	100

HEATING FACILITIES

Private	361	72	297	79	64	50
Shared	128	25	71	19	57	45
None	15	3	9	2	6	5
Totals	504	100	377	100	127	100

OVERCROWDING

Measured by any standard index, most of Newark's migrants lacked the elbow room essential for decent living. The American way of life should insure six rooms for a family of four, equivalent to .67 persons per room. But 85% of the migrant families were definitely below that standard, their index being .75 or more persons per room.

Using a second test, 68% were crowded to the extent of averaging one or more persons per room, and a third yardstick showed that 17% were in the category of 1.5 or more persons per room. Overcrowding of this degree is not only uncomfortable but also dangerous.

Each one of the three indices showed that Negroes were subject to greater overcrowding than whites. For example, only 12% of the white families were living with 1.5 or more persons per room, but 33% of the Negroes were.

Doubling up was found to be fairly common, with 159 families (31%) of the 504 sharing the same household with one or more additional families. Of these 159, the white families numbered 109 and the Negro families 50. Further, 10.6% of the white families and 26% of the Negro families slept with other families in the same room. There were 26 cases where other members of the household shared the parents' bedroom, 2 cases where parents and children over 8 slept in the same room, and 2 cases where children over 8 of different sexes occupied the same room.

Study of the living arrangements of the 270 single person families and 234 multi-person families showed Negroes consistently had inferior quarters. While 70% of the multi-person white families had separate dwelling units, only 26% of the Negro families enjoyed that degree of privacy. Only 7% of the white families of two or more persons lived in rooming houses but 31% of the Negro families were found in these lodgings.

TABLE 11
INDICES OF OVERCROWDING AMONG 504 MIGRANT FAMILIES

Index of persons per room	Total		White		Negro	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A: .75 and over.....	432	85	311	82	121	95
B: 1.0 and over.....	342	68	236	62	106	83
C: 1.5 and over.....	89	17	47	12	42	33

TABLE 12
TYPES OF OVERCROWDING AMONG 262 MIGRANT FAMILIES

Type of overcrowding	No. white families	No. Negro families	Total No. families	% of 504 total families
2 or more families in one household (excluding rooming houses)	109	50	159	31.5
2 or more families sleep in same room	40	33	73	14.4
Parents and child over 8 sleep in same room	2	0	2	.3
Other members of household sleep in parents' room.....	22	4	26	5.1
Children over 8 of different sexes sleep in same room.....	1	1	2	.3
Totals	174	88	262	

NEWARK'S HOUSING PROBLEM

The urgency of the housing shortage in Newark—a shortage that affects long-time residents no less than migrant war workers—is apparent from these facts:

1. The Department of Public Health has been condemning uninhabitable buildings and ordering tenants to move. The tenants have protested that habitable homes could not be found, and court action has been necessary to remove them from unfit dwellings. The Health Department and other agencies are fully aware of the difficulty of getting any kind of decent shelter. In one instance a condemned school was taken over and partitioned to serve as a temporary home for some 40 or 50 of the evicted families. Obviously such makeshift housing is no real improvement.

2. The Housing Authority has no vacancies. The War Housing Center has appealed unsuccessfully to realtors for listings of vacancies.

3. Personnel and production managers in war factories have reported that the shortage of decent housing is a serious factor in excessive rates of absenteeism and turnover.

4. Police say congested living conditions resulting from the scarcity of good homes are in part responsible for increased juvenile delinquency and racial tension.

The Board of Health said in its 1942 report:

"In this city, housing has been for many years an acute problem. There are certain wards in the city, particularly the Third, where the rate of house deterioration has been such that many buildings used for occupancy of thousands of individuals are at present unfit for human habitation. The onset of the war, with the consequent increase in the number of workers, has brought about undesirable and dangerous overcrowding. We are, therefore, faced with a steadily decreasing number of suitable homes and an increasing demand for them among our working groups."

Two years later, thousands of individuals are still living in those buildings "unfit for human habitation." The only difference is that the buildings have deteriorated further and landlords, even when willing, find it harder to make any kind of repairs.

In 1934 the Health Department made a comprehensive survey of Newark's housing under CWA auspices. It was found that 8,558 families comprising 57,636 persons were living in substandard and overcrowded dwellings. Similarly a survey of the Third Ward in 1937 gave a shocking picture. Out of 2,000 dwellings surveyed, only 7% were in good condition and 15% were totally unfit for habitation. The Health Department was legally required to raze the 300 unfit buildings and order major or minor repairs to the great bulk of the others. But—as the Department reported—

"The demolition of these buildings would only aggravate the housing problem by displacing more than 750 families who would

have no suitable homes to live in. It must not be considered that these conditions exist only in the Third Ward for many other wards of the city have similar slum conditions."

As further evidence of the acute housing shortage, the vacancy rate in Newark at the end of 1943 was only 0.6%. In 1941 the rate was only 1% and most of the vacancies were in the class of \$50 a month or over—wholly beyond the reach of the thousands of families in the worst homes.

The low vacancy rate has probably been a factor in restricting migration to Newark. As part of this survey, the relationship between the number of migrants and the vacancy rate in the various census tracts was studied. It was determined that most of the migrants settled in areas where the vacancy rate was low (undoubtedly because these would be the cheaper rental areas). This trend simply increased the overcrowding that already existed.